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A TRIBUTE

TO THE MEMORY

OF

HON. WILLIAM WILLIS, LL.D.,

OF PORTLAND, MAINE.

READ BEFORE THE

NUMISMATIC AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
OF PHILADELPHIA,

AT ITS

Stated Meeting Thursday Evening March 3, 1870.

BY

CHARLES HENRY HART,
HISTORIOGRAPHER OF THE SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:
1870.

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COLLINS, PRINTER.

A TRIBUTE.

It is my official duty to announce to the Society this evening, the death of its Honorary Vice-President for the State of Maine, Hon. William Willis, who died at his residence in Portland, on Thursday, February 17th, at the advanced age of seventy-six years; and I offer for your consideration the following resolutions of respect:—

Resolved, That the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia has heard with feelings of unfeigned sorrow and sincere regret of the decease of its late Honorary Vice-President for the State of Maine, Hon. William Willis, A.M., LL.D., therefore be it further,

Resolved, That while this Society is grateful that the life of one whose well-balanced and cultivated mind, sound and discriminating judgment, various accurate and extensive knowledge in the study of subjects of historical inquiry, together with an industry that never flagged, should have been spared beyond the time allotted upon earth to man, with his mind bright and active to the last; still it cannot but be sensible of the great gap left in its roll of members by his death, and the irreparable loss sustained by the field of investigation he so loved to explore.

Resolved, That these resolutions be entered at large upon the minutes of this meeting.

William Willis was born in Haverhill, Mass., August 31, 1794. His father was Benjamin Willis, born at Charlestown, Mass., March 5, 1768. He married, January 9, 1791, Mary, third daughter of Dr. William M'Kinstry, of Taunton, whose father, the Rev. John M'Kinstry, of Ellington, emigrated to this country in 1718, from the county of Antrim in the province of Ulster, Ireland, whither his parents fled about 1669, from the religious persecutions in Scotland, under Charles the Second. The paternal ancestry of Mr. Willis can be traced with certainty to Michael "Wills" or "Willis," styled "cutler"

of Dorchester, Mass., who with George Willis, of Cambridge (likely his brother), was admitted to the freeman's oath in 1638, and became a founder of the Second Church in Boston, June 5, 1650. His will was proved October 7, 1669, probably not long after his death. He had a son, Michael, born November 11, 1652, whose son, Michael the third, born July 4, 1694, was the father of Benjamin Willis, born September 11, 1717, who perished at the siege of Louisburg, leaving his wife, Ann Gammell, and an only son, born January 10, 1743, and named from his father, to survive him. This Benjamin, the second of the name, who died November 11, 1811, was the grandfather of the subject of this notice. Benjamin Willis had by his wife, Mary M'Kinstry, eight children, the second of whom was William, whose career I propose briefly to sketch. When he was nine years of age his father removed to Portland, Me., from whence he was sent in 1808, to Exeter Academy, for his preparation for a college course. In 1810, he was admitted to the Sophomore class of Harvard University, and in 1813 took his first degree. He is reported to have been a diligent student, and to have shared honorably in the distribution of the honors at the commencement exercises. He returned to his father's home after his graduation, and was entered a student at law in the office of Hon. Prentiss Mellen; but his father returning with his family to Boston in 1815, he was transferred to the office of Judge Peter O. Thacher, where he completed his legal course, and was admitted to the Suffolk Bar in January, 1817, and immediately opened an office in Boston. In August, 1815, he had sailed from Boston in company with his friend, the late Edwin Bartlett, of New York, for Lisbon, and after an absence of several months arrived at Norfolk, Va., January 25, 1816, having made the round trip to Portugal and back in his friend's company. It is to Mr. Willis that a humorous allusion is made, in the description of a severe storm on their outward trip, in the journal of his friend, referred to in the beautiful tribute to Mr. Bartlett, by Dr. Ruschenberger, of this city, entitled "A Memory." Two years later he visited the West Indies, and resided in the islands of Martinique and Guadaloupe until the spring of 1818, when he returned to his home and resumed his profession.

In April, 1819, his first preceptor in the principles of the law having been elected a Senator in Congress, invited his former pupil to return to Portland and take charge of his practice. An invitation so flattering and so favorable was not to be neglected, and in response he removed to Portland and entered into copartnership with Mr. Mellen, who had then a very extensive practice; but the next year, soon after the organization of the State, the latter was appointed the first Chief-Justice of Maine, the result of which was of course to dissolve their business relations. Mr. Willis continued to practise his profession alone until 1835, when he formed a connection with the late distinguished Senator from Maine, Hon. William Pitt Fessenden, which continued very successfully for nearly twenty years. As a lawyer Mr. Willis stood high; a practitioner of sterling integrity, gentle and pleasing in address, a sound and safe counsellor, he had few superiors. Soon after his return to Portland he was engaged as assistant editor of one of the newspapers of the city, and continued in that position for three or four years. On the 1st of September, 1823, Mr. Willis married Julia, daughter of the late Chief-Justice Ezekiel Whitman, of Maine, who died at East Bridgewater, Mass., August 1, 1866, aged 90 years and 4 months. The issue of this marriage was eight children, one only of whom, a daughter, the wife of Dr. Baron C. Watson, of New York, is believed to survive. Mr. Willis' mother died in Boston, February 12, 1847, after a happy union of fifty-six years with her husband, who survived until October 1, 1853, in his 86th year. The same number of years did her son enjoy the same blessing, his wife being left to mourn his loss.

In the prosperity of the Maine Historical Society he was much interested, and was elected a member in 1828, six years after its formation. In the first volume of its "Collections," published in 1831, appeared Part I. of his history of Portland; Part II. being published in a separate form two years later. He has been the chief editor of all the publications of the Society, and to most of them a valued contributor. The second volume, published in 1847, contained "Supplementary Remarks to an Account of an Ancient Settlement on Shepscot River," and an appreciative notice of the character and

writings of William Ladd, of Minot, both from his pen, while the fourth volume contains a most valuable contribution to American philology in an "Essay on the Language of the Abnaquis Indians," with an appendix, in the shape of a letter to the author, from the late Hon. Chandler E. Potter, of New Hampshire; and an introductory address which he was invited to deliver before the Historical Society at its first public meeting, in Augusta, February 2, 1855, in which he gives a rapid glance at the history and statistics of the State and the requirements of the Society. In 1831, he had been elected Recording Secretary, and annually re-elected until 1834, the last year holding at the same time the office of Treasurer. In 1846, he was again chosen to the position of Secretary, and continued discharging the duties of this post until 1856, when he succeeded the Hon. Robert H. Gardiner as President, and was successively re-elected until 1865, when he resigned and Hon. Edward E. Bourne was chosen his successor. Upon his accession to the President's chair he delivered an inaugural address dedicated to the memory of his predecessors in that office. A copy of this address he kindly sent me a few years since, enriched, not "defaced" as he termed it, with his manuscript notes and additions. He had used it, he wrote me, in the preparation of "A History of the Law, the Courts, and the Lawyers of Maine," an octavo volume of over seven hundred pages, published in 1863. In 1858, he delivered an interesting and valuable address on the Scotch-Irish emigration to Maine, giving incidentally a brief account of Presbyterianism, to which he subsequently added a "Genealogy of the M'Kinstry Family," a second edition of which, much enlarged, was printed in 1866, and a copy presented by the author, is in our library. His last literary enterprise for the Historical Society was the supervision last year of Dr. J. G. Kohl's learned history of the "Discovery of Maine," forming the first volume of the documentary history of the State, published under the authority of the Legislature, which made a special appropriation for the purpose, and sent the Rev. Dr. Leonard Woods, late President of Bowdoin College, to Europe, to investigate the subject and secure every document and paper calculated to throw light upon it. To the "Register" of the N. E. Historic-Genealogical Society, of which he was from

1855 to 1859 one of the Vice-Presidents, he made many interesting contributions, the last to the number for April, 1869, entitled "A Summary of Voyages to the Northern Atlantic Coast of America in the Sixteenth Century," based upon the work of Dr. Kohl just mentioned. He also wrote a "Bibliographical Essay on the Early Collections of Voyages to America," a very careful and able paper, which was printed in the fifteenth volume of the "Register." To the "Historical Magazine or American Notes and Queries," for January, 1868, he contributed a "Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Maine Historical Society," and to No. 4, of Norton's "Literary Letter," published at New York in 1859, a "Bibliography of the State of Maine," a copy of which with manuscript additions by himself, he presented to this Society. He was engaged upon an enlarged and revised edition of this work at the time of his death. The only works of Mr. Willis not enumerated that I can now recall are "Smith's and Deane's Journal," which he prepared for the press in 1849, with notes and biographical sketches, and a new edition of his "History of Portland," a large volume of nearly one thousand pages, which appeared in 1865. The entire edition of this work which remained in the hands of the publisher, was utterly consumed in the great Portland fire of July 4, 1866.

Mr. Willis was intrusted by his fellow-townsmen with many important and honorable positions. In 1855, he was a Senator in the Legislature of Maine, and in 1857, Mayor of the city of Portland, and was chosen an Elector of President of the United States in 1860, and appointed President of the Electoral College. He was for many years a Director and Vice-President of the Merchants' Bank of Portland, and President of the Portland Benevolent Society, and also of the Portland Institute, the latter taking the place of a public library. His last public act was as pall-bearer at the obsequies of Mr. Peabody, and in consequence of his fast declining strength, he alone was provided with a seat. Two years ago, Bowdoin College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, a well-merited and richly deserved distinction. He was a member of nearly all of the State Historical Societies, including that of Massachusetts. At the annual meeting of this Society, in December, 1867, he was selected as one of its

honorary Vice-Presidents, and promptly accepted the position in most complimentary terms. He seemed to take great interest in the subjects marked out for study by our Society, and made many valuable donations both to the cabinet and to the library. With one of his donations (a copy in plaster of a rare and valuable medal of Cecil, second Lord Baltimore), he wrote a highly instructive historical description which I had the pleasure of presenting at the time.

This sketch, or more properly memorandum of facts, which has been thrown together in great haste, will amply prove that our late member well earned the deference paid him by this Society when it chose him to the office which death has made vacant. He died of pure physical exhaustion induced by unceasing activity of brain, without the slightest abatement in the clearness of his intellectual powers: thus the wish expressed by him a few days before his death was fulfilled. "My hope is," said Mr. Willis, "that I may not outlive my intellectual strength." I cannot bring this notice to a close in a more appropriate manner, than by citing an extract from a letter received a few days since from our corresponding member, Hubbard W. Bryant, Esq., a warm personal friend of the deceased. He writes: "Our State and city sustain a great loss in his death, and it will be long ere his place is even partly filled. I knew him quite intimately, and can testify to his superior erudition and memory, which did not fail him to the last. His manners were very modest and unassuming, and he was always pleased to give information to those who sought it. He had a strong interest in our Public Library enterprise from its earliest conception, and much of the success it has attained is owing to him. A large portion of his private library is left by his will to the Public Library. He dropped away suddenly and quite unexpectedly to his family and friends, being confined to his bed but half a day." The services at his funeral took place at the First Parish Church on Saturday, the 19th, and were attended by a large gathering of his fellow-citizens, including the members of the city government in a body, who followed his remains to Evergreen Cemetery where they were interred, there to await the final call of his beloved Master, in whom he so firmly believed.

A

NECROLOGICAL NOTICE

OF THE

Hon. RICHARD STOCKTON FIELD, LL. D.,

OF PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

READ BEFORE THE

NUMISMATIC AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,

AT ITS

Regular Monthly Meeting, Thursday Evening, October 6, 1870.

BY

CHARLES HENRY HART, LL. B.,

HISTORIOGRAPHER OF THE SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:

1870.

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COLLINS, PRINTER.

NECROLOGICAL NOTICE.

At the meeting next following the demise of our late Honorary Vice-President for the State of New Jersey, Richard Stockton Field, LL. D., I presented for your consideration some resolutions of respect to his memory, and I will now ask your attention while I sketch briefly his life.

Richard Stockton Field was born at Whitehill, in the county of Burlington, New Jersey, on the last day of December, 1803. The history of the family descent is somewhat obscure, but it is certain that he was descended from the same family as John Field, the distinguished English astronomer of the middle of the sixteenth century, who was the first to use the Copernican system as a basis for calculations for practical purposes, in his "Ephemeris anni 1557 currentis, juxta Copernici et Reinhaldi Canones fideliter per Joannem Field." This work, which was of considerable magnitude, was undertaken at the suggestion of the celebrated Dr. Dee, and was probably the very first publication in which any notice was taken of the discoveries of Copernicus. This John Field was born about the year 1520, and was a son of Richard Fielde of Ardsley, who was likely a grandson of William Fielde or Feld of Bradford, who died in 1480. In 1555, the year before he published his first Ephemeris, he was admitted fellow of Lincoln's College, Oxford. About 1560 he married Jane Amyas, a daughter of John Amyas, of Kent, and removed from London, where he had been living, to Ardsley, where he died in 1587. He published an Ephemeris for 1558, and another for 1559, in each of which he put forth more strongly

than in the last, his support of the system which he had the honor of introducing into England. "It was in recognition of the great service which he had thus rendered to the cause of science, that he received a patent in 1558, authorizing him to wear as a crest over his family arms, a *red right arm* issuing from the clouds and supporting a golden sphere, thereby intimating the splendor of the Copernican discovery. There is a seal in the possession of the family at Princeton which was no doubt handed down from one generation to another—on one side is the family coat of arms, on another is the crest before referred to—an arm supporting a globe—and on the third side 'R. F.,' the initials of the name of Robert Field," the emigrant ancestor of the family in this country. John Field had nine children, from the second of whom, Mathew, born at Ardley in 1563, it has been attempted to trace the American family of the name. This, however, is considered to be erroneous, while it is admitted that the American family are descended from the William of Bradford, the supposed great-grandfather of the astronomer, which if correct would make Richard Fielde the father of John, and John Fielde the known ancestor of the emigrant, first cousins. The existence of the triangular seal with the initials of the emigrant ancestor of the family in this country on one side, and the crest granted to the astronomer on a second, with the arms of the family on the third, does not prove by any means conclusively that the former was a direct descendant of the latter; as ribbons and crests were often adopted by a family who had no hereditary right to them, and worn over their legitimate "coats armour," which might have been *sans* crest. It does, however, tend to show very strongly that they were descended from the same family, as has already been asserted; but when the fact of the direct descent hangs merely upon tradition, while that of collateral descent is based upon the evidence of ancient records, we are surely bound to regard the latter and discard the former, as I have done in the present case, therein

following Osgood Field, Esq., of London, in his researches. The last-named John Fielde had a son William, who died in 1599, whose son, also William, died in 1619, and had Robert, born about 1605, who married May 18, 1630, Elizabeth Taylor, with whom he came to New England, according to one account, in 1635, while by another it was not until nine years later. In 1645 he removed with his family to Newtown, Long Island, and with others received from Governor Keift a patent for a tract of land known as the Flushing Patent, which was dated October 10, 1645. He had five children; the second, a son named Anthony, died in 1691, and had two children, the eldest of whom was John, who removed to Boundbrook, in New Jersey, about 1685, and was the founder of the family in that State. His direct descendants, as far as they can be traced, are his son, Robert Field, born January 6th, 1694, married Mary, daughter of Samuel and Susanna Taylor, by whom he had Robert, born May 9th, 1723, and married Mary, daughter of Oswald and Lydia Peale. He died January 29, 1775, and had posthumous issue Robert C. Field, born April 5th, 1775. This was the father of our late member. In 1793, he was graduated by Princeton College, and had for a classmate John Henry Hobart, afterwards the distinguished Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church for the Diocese of New York. "He married Abby, born 8th of April, 1773, daughter of Richard Stockton and Annis Boudinot, in 1797." He died in 1810, leaving five children, the fourth of whom was the subject of this notice. The next year after his father's death the family removed to Princeton, where was the residence of the family of Mrs. Field, and at this place he received his education, being graduated with high honors by Princeton College in 1821. On his leaving college he entered upon the study of the law with his maternal uncle, Richard Stockton, one of the most distinguished members of the New Jersey bar, and was admitted to practice in February, 1825. He at once removed to Salem, in his

native State, where he continued in the practice of his profession until 1832, when he returned to Princeton and made it his future residence.

In 1831, while still at Salem, he married Miss Mary Ritchie, and by her he had five children, she dying September 8th, 1852, after a union of twenty-one years. For several years Mr. Field was a member of the State Legislature, and in February, 1838, was appointed Attorney-General by Governor Pennington, and in this high and responsible position, which he resigned in 1841, he acquitted himself with ability and honor. He was a leading member of the Convention which met at Trenton on the 14th of May, 1844, and formed the present Constitution of the State, and when in 1851 it was resolved to form an Association of the surviving members of that Convention, he was appointed to deliver the address at its first annual meeting. This address, which was delivered February 1st, 1853, has been printed, and contains an eloquent memorial of the great Convention which sixty-six years before met in this city, and with Washington as its President framed the Constitution of these United States.

In the New Jersey Historical Society, of which he was at the time of his death its third President, he always took a lively interest. To its publications he contributed his most elaborate work, "The Provincial Courts of New Jersey, with Sketches of the Bench and Bar." It forms the third volume of the Collections of the Society, and was the subject of two discourses delivered by him in January and May, 1848. At the meeting of the Society in September, 1851, he read a valuable paper on the celebrated "Trial of the Rev. William Tennent for Perjury in 1742," which was printed in the proceedings of the meeting; and to The Princeton Review for July, 1852, he contributed the leading article, on "The Publications of the New Jersey Historical Society," but more particularly noticing its latest issue, "The Papers of Governor Lewis Morris." "Elected one of the Executive Committee

in 1851, he continued to hold the position until 1865, when, on the elevation of the Hon. James Parker to the presidency on the death of the Hon. Joseph C. Hornblower, he was chosen First Vice-President, and on the death of Mr. Parker in 1868, succeeded him in the Presidency." At the annual meeting in January, 1865, he delivered "An Address on the Life and Character of Chief Justice Hornblower," and at the January meeting, 1869, a similar one on his predecessor, President Parker. Copies of each of these we have, as also of most of his other publications, through his own kindness.

Mr. Field was much interested in the great question of public education, and when, in 1855, the State Normal School was organized, he was chosen President of the Board of Trustees, and about this time he delivered an address on "The Power of Habit." (Allibone's Dictionary of Authors.) He continued in this position until the hour of his death, and every Annual Report made to the Legislature by this Board was written by him. He has been succeeded in the office by our corresponding member, the Hon. William A. Whitehead, of Newark. For some years he was a Professor in the law school connected with Princeton College, which owed its very existence to his energy and talents, and in 1859, his Alma Mater conferred upon him her degree of Doctor of Laws.

During the troublous times of the last decade of years he was a stanch supporter of the government, and although the writer cannot agree with him in some of his constitutional views and theories, still he must admire the force and earnestness with which they were expressed. By request of his fellow townsmen he delivered before them an oration on the 4th of July, 1861, with "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States" as his subject. In this he strongly advances those views already referred to. On the death of Hon. John R. Thomson, a Senator in Congress from New Jersey, Mr. Field was appointed, Nov. 1862, by Governor

Olden to fill the unexpired term. But his service in the council of the nation was but brief; he being appointed by President Lincoln, Judge of the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, on the 21st of January, 1863. During his occupancy of a seat in the Senate of the United States he had the opportunity, however, of making a speech or rather an argument on the Discharge of State Prisoners, January 7, 1863, which drew upon him the special attention of a large portion of the Republican party, and particularly of its press. In this speech he supported the position that the right to suspend the writ of habeas corpus was vested in the President, and not in Congress. His views on this subject were in accordance with those expressed by the venerable Horace Binney in his celebrated pamphlets on the subject of the "Suspension of the Writ." That they were wrong and the act of the executive in suspending it unconstitutional, was virtually acknowledged by the act of March 3d, 1863, authorizing the suspension. On this subject the argument of Mr. Justice Read, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, written for Mr. Sumner, is exhaustive and unanswerable, and it may be well considered that the passage of the act just alluded to was based upon this argument. When Mr. Field took his seat upon the bench of the United States District Court, April 21st, 1863, he delivered a most learned and excellent charge to the grand jury, which has been printed in a pamphlet of twenty-four pages. In his judicial life he has been described by one who knew him well, District Attorney Keasbey, as a "wise, upright, fearless, and merciful judge." The same gentleman then continues:—"Only one decision of his was ever reversed; that was one in which the Supreme Court were at first almost evenly divided, and ordered a new argument. Even in the warmth of advocacy, or after that warmth had cooled a little, I scarcely ever felt that he was wrong. He had a keen perception of the real point and merits of a case. With all his rich culture he had sagacity

and sound common sense. If he was at all complained of it was for the ardor and zeal with which he expressed himself on the bench. This was in his nature. He always did it with courtesy and kindness, and so as to carry conviction to the minds he addressed. And I am sure there is not one of all who have been in this court, who will ever say that he was warped in his judgment by any impure or unworthy motive. In these duties he had a wonderful mastery of the English tongue. He was fully acquainted with the fountains of English eloquence, and his mind was so stored with the fruits of his learning that he had a rare facility of expression. He always preferred to charge juries or decide cases on the spot. He could always do it better than if he stopped to think or write. I think that if we could reproduce simply his addresses to prisoners about to be sentenced, they would be striking models of manly and tender exhortation."

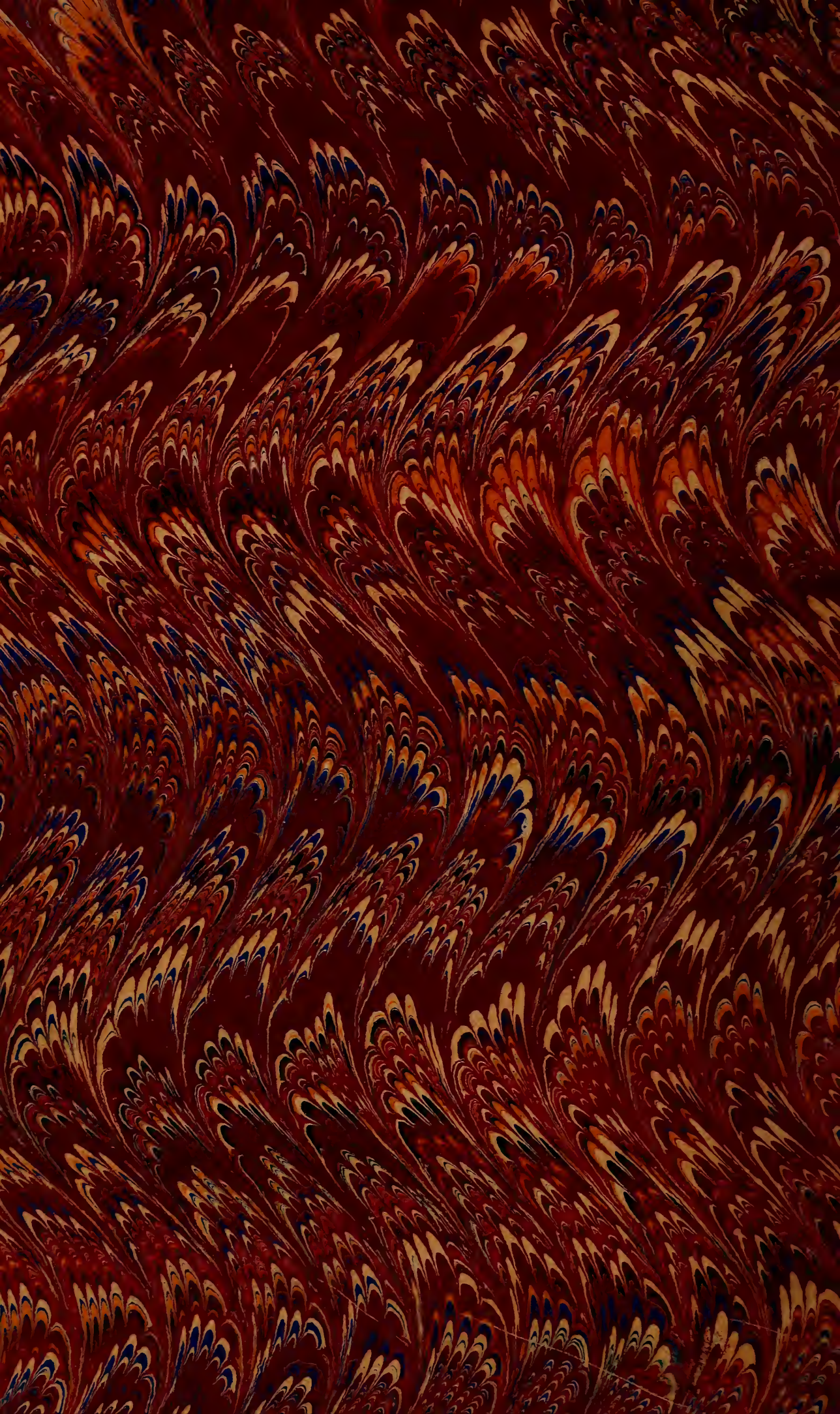
Mr. Field was a warm admirer of the late President Lincoln; as he has expressed it himself, he was "one whom I loved while living, and whose death I deeply deplore." At the request of the Legislature of New Jersey, Mr. Field delivered before it, February 12, 1866, an oration on the Life and Character of Abraham Lincoln, it being the anniversary of the President's birthday. At the Centennial Celebration of the American Whig Society of the College of New Jersey, in June, 1869, Mr. Field delivered his last public address, and it is one marked by great purity of style and graceful erudition. It is on his favorite theme of Education.

In April last, while Mr. Field was in the discharge of his duties on the bench, he was stricken with a paralysis, and after uttering some incoherent remarks, fell senseless from his seat. He was carried from the court-room to his beautiful home, in which he so much prided himself, and after lingering some weeks totally unconscious, resigned his spirit to his Father on the 25th day of May, 1870, and was interred

in the rural graveyard at Princeton, "beside the wife he lost eighteen years before."

One of the most striking points of his character, and one to be fondly cherished, for it reveals better, perhaps, than any other could, the inmost recesses of his heart, was his warm love of nature and of nature's works. The spacious grounds about his residence at Princeton were remarkable for the rich collection of trees and flowers there cultivated, comprising specimens from the remotest parts of the earth. These he tended with an almost parental affection, and the name of each, with its peculiarity and locality, was firmly fastened on his memory. He attended the services of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and in its councils was an active worker, being repeatedly a delegate both to the Diocesan and General Conventions. This record of his life I trust will afford ample reason for his being chosen at the annual meeting of this Society in January, 1866, an Honorary Vice-President, and to its library he has been a faithful contributor.

He left three children to survive him, to one of whom, Miss Annis S. Field, I am indebted for much of the material for this sketch.



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